

Prepared Statement

of

Honorable Michael L. Dominguez

**Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Personnel & Readiness)**

Before the

House Armed Services Committee

Subcommittee on Military Personnel

December 6, 2006

Michael L. Dominguez was nominated by the President as the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness on November 21, 2005 and confirmed by the Senate on July 11, 2006. As a presidential appointee confirmed by the Senate, he is the primary assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness providing staff advice to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense for total force management as it relates to manpower; force structure; readiness; Reserve Component affairs; health affairs; training; and personnel policy and management, including equal opportunity, morale, welfare, recreation, and quality of life matters.

Prior to this appointment, Mr. Dominguez served, from August 2001 until July 2006, as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. His responsibilities included developing and overseeing Air Force manpower and personnel policies, readiness, and Reserve Component affairs.

Mr. Dominguez also served as Acting-Secretary of the Air Force from March 28, 2005 thru July 29, 2005. In this role, he was responsible for the affairs of the Department of the Air Force, including the organizing, training, equipping and providing for the welfare of its more than 360,000 men and women on active duty, 180,000 members of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, 160,000 civilians, and their families.

As an Air Force dependent, Mr. Dominguez grew up on bases around the world. After graduating in 1975 from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, reported to Vicenza, Italy, then worked varied assignments with the 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry (Airborne) and the Southern European Task Force. After leaving the military in 1980, Mr. Dominguez went into private business and attended Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. In 1983 he joined the Office of the Secretary of Defense as an analyst for Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E).

Mr. Dominguez entered the Senior Executive Service in 1991 as PA&E's Director for Planning and Analytical Support. In this position he oversaw production of DOD's long-range planning forecast and its \$12 billion in annual information technology investments. He also directed the PA&E modernization of computing, communications and modeling infrastructure. He joined the Chief of Naval Operations staff in 1994 and assisted in the Navy's development of multi-year programs and annual budgets. Mr. Dominguez left federal government in 1997 to join a technology service organization. In 1999 he began work at the Center for Naval Analyses where he organized and directed studies of complex public policy and program issues. In 2001 he rejoined the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations where he worked until his appointment as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force.

EDUCATION

1975 Bachelor of Science degree, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.

1983 Master's degree in business administration, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.

1989 Program for Senior Officials in National Security, Harvard University

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

1. June 1983 - September 1988, program analyst, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation, Washington, D.C.
2. October 1988 - September 1991, executive assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation, Washington, D.C.
3. October 1991 - September 1994, Director for Planning and Analytical Support, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation, Washington D.C.
4. October 1994 - April 1997, Associate Director for Programming, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.
5. April 1997 - September 1999, General Manager, Tech 2000 Inc., Herndon, Va.
6. September 1999 - January 2001, Research Project Director, Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria, Va.
7. January 2001 - August 2001, Assistant Director for Space, Information Warfare, and Command and Control, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.
8. August 2001 - March 2005, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Washington, D.C.
9. March 2005 – July 2005, acting Secretary of the Air Force and Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Washington, D.C.
10. July 2005 – July 2006, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Washington, D.C.
11. July 2006 – Present, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Washington, D.C.

AWARDS AND HONORS

1980 Army Commendation Medal
1988 and 1994 Defense Meritorious Civilian Service Medal
1993 Defense Civilian Service Medal
1997 Superior Civilian Service Medal, Department of the Navy
1998 Meritorious Executive Presidential Rank Award
January 2005, July 2005 and July 2006, Air Force Exceptional Civilian Service Medal

Mr. Chairman and distinguished committee members, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I welcome the opportunity to provide an overview of the Department's decorations and awards program, to make a few comments about the program, and to update the Subcommittee on the status of the review undertaken by the Department to ensure the awards program meets contemporary needs.

Service in uniform is a noble undertaking. All Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines are volunteers who serve with the knowledge that the Department of Defense and the Nation shall appropriately recognize their contributions and sacrifices.

The Department's decorations and awards program provides tangible recognition for acts of valor, exceptional service or achievement, and individual acts of heroism. This recognition serves to foster high morale, esprit de corps, motivation of others to do like deeds, and public acknowledgment of our Service member's actions, achievements and sacrifices. The foundation of the program is based on time-tested criteria that are understood and applied by field commanders in recognizing acts of valor across conflicts of varying type and intensity. In this regard, it is important to understand that the criteria for valor awards originated in Statute or Executive Orders, and are promulgated in the Department's award manual (DODM 1348.33M). Application and adherence to the criteria in recognizing valorous actions of Service member's in combat are under the purview of the Secretaries of the Military Departments. Those Secretaries are designated

as the approval authorities for valor awards -- less Medal of Honor -- and have stringent processing procedures that reflect Service-specific operational norms and cultures. Department policy stresses that awards shall be processed in a timely and accurate manner. The Services continue to address timeliness of presentation of awards. In general, award processing time depends upon the level of approval authority, whether the award requires the review of a board, and the promptness of the initial submission by the individual's unit. At the unit level, timeliness of the submission and the inclusion of all required documentation for the award can be affected by ongoing operations and other mission requirements. The Services anticipate that evolving paperless systems and digital signature capabilities in the near future will reduce processing times.

In the United States, the tradition of military decorations can be traced back to the American Revolution when General George Washington created the Badge of Military Merit to recognize soldiers who displayed "unusual gallantry in battle, or extraordinary fidelity and essential service." The first medals were not part of an organized, systematic plan of awards, but were intended to recognize certain individuals for special occasions. In fact the Badge of Military Merit fell into disuse after the Revolutionary War, and was revived as the Purple Heart in 1932.

Throughout the history of the Armed Forces of the United States, over 20 different awards have evolved to recognize varying degrees of valor and performance. Changes in eligibility criteria were made over the years; however, the basic hierarchy of military decorations and awards remains unchanged.

The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration that our Nation can bestow on a Service member for valor in combat. There are several other awards that the Department uses to recognize valor in descending order from the Medal of Honor, such as the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Air Force Cross, Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross, and Bronze Star with Valor Device.

Allow me to highlight the key criteria for the top five valor awards outlined in statute and executive order – standards that have served us well for more than 60 years. We believe these criteria are sufficient in allowing commanders to render appropriate decisions with regard to the most suitable level of award for the circumstance presented, and to properly honor valorous and heroic actions.

The Medal of Honor is awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces who distinguish themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their lives above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States.

Service Crosses are awarded to those in uniform who distinguish themselves by extraordinary heroism not justifying the award of the Medal of Honor, while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States.

The Silver Star is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity with the Armed Forces of the United States, distinguishes himself or herself by gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States.

The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded to any persons who, after April 6, 1917, while serving in any capacity with the United States Armed Forces,

distinguish themselves by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight.

The Bronze Star may be awarded to any person who, after December 6, 1941, while serving in any capacity with the Armed Forces of the United States, distinguishes himself or herself by heroic or meritorious achievement or service, not involving participation in aerial flight while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States. When the Bronze Star is awarded for valor, a bronze letter "V" is worn on the suspension and service ribbon of that medal.

In addition there are Service-specific valor awards denoted by application of the valor device to their commendation and achievement awards.

The Military Decorations and Awards Manual explains the Department's policies and procedures for awarding Defense decorations; and promulgates to the Military Departments the valor award criteria stipulated in statute. Additionally, the Service Secretaries are directed by policy to establish procedures in their respective Departments to ensure compliance with the policies and procedures outlined in the Department's Military Decorations and Awards program.

I believe it is appropriate to discuss the Nation's highest valor award – The Medal of Honor in more detail. The Medal of Honor was the first decoration following General Washington's Badge of Military Merit to be designed and authorized for U.S. Service members. On December 21, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln approved the establishment of a Navy Medal of Honor for enlisted men of

the Navy and Marine Corps. On July 12, 1862, the President authorized the Army Medal of Honor for enlisted members of the U.S. Army. On March 3, 1863, Congress passed an Act that extended the presentations of the Army Medal of Honor to officers, as well as non-commissioned officers and privates and made the Medal of Honor a permanent decoration. On March 3, 1915, officers of the Navy were authorized the Medal of Honor. 3,258 Medals of Honor have been awarded for heroic actions in the nation's battles since 1863.

The Medal of Honor has undergone intense scrutiny since its inception in 1861. There are documented cases where specially appointed review boards rescinded previously awarded Medals of Honor in an effort to elevate the prominence of our nation's highest valor award. In addition, there was a longstanding practice between World War I and World War II of awarding the Medal of Honor for "extraordinary heroism in the line of one's profession" resulting, for example, in the Medal of Honor being awarded to Admiral Richard Byrd for his exploration of the arctic region and Captain Charles Lindbergh for his solo flight from New York to Paris in 1927. Consequently, Congress—in 1942—more clearly defined the criteria for awarding the Medal of Honor, "to those who distinguished [themselves] conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of [their lives] above and beyond the call of duty." The current criteria for the Medal of Honor are those established by the Congress in 1942 and have not changed for the Global War on Terrorism.

As is befitting the Nation's highest military honor, the nomination and approval process for the medal is exacting and awards typically occur sometime after the event they recognize. Of the 843 Medals of Honor awarded since World War II, 517 or 61% have been awarded posthumously. This may be in large measure attributed to the "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity," "risking life" and "beyond the call of duty" criteria -- which are unique to the Medal of Honor.

The award adjudication process is exacting, as no award of a Medal of Honor should ever be open to criticism -- we must get it right the first time. Medal of Honor recommendations are thoroughly scrutinized to ensure the event upon which the recommendation is based fully meets the high standards for the Nation's highest military honor. The award recommendation originates from individuals close to the event, normally with direct knowledge of the details of the combat, and of the heroism and gallantry displayed by the individual proposed for recognition as well as that displayed by his or her peers. The local commander's recommendation is forwarded through the chain of command where it is reviewed and endorsed by boards of seasoned, experienced leaders. Boards are determined by Service policy. Medal of Honor recommendations are forwarded to the theater Combatant Commander for endorsement prior to being delivered to the appropriate Military Department. Here again, each recommendation is thoroughly reviewed by the Military Department's Senior Decorations Board. The recommendation is subsequently endorsed by the respective Service Chief and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The recommendation is then returned to the

Military Department for their Secretary's endorsement. Once the Secretary of the Military Department is satisfied that the Service member's actions meet the criteria and warrant awarding of the Medal of Honor, the recommendation is forwarded to the Secretary of Defense through the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. If the Secretary of Defense agrees that the Medal of Honor recommendation meets the criteria, it is forwarded with a recommendation of approval to the President for decision. The Medal of Honor is the only valor award that directly involves the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the President.

Since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, two Medals of Honor have been awarded for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the first to a soldier and the second (announced by the President, presentation pending) to a Marine.

Sergeant First Class Paul R. Smith was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously by President Bush on April 4, 2005 for his acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty against an armed enemy near Baghdad International Airport on April 4, 2003. Sergeant First Class Smith was engaged in the construction of a prisoner of war holding area when his Task Force was violently attacked by a company-sized enemy force. Realizing the vulnerability of over 100 fellow soldiers, Sergeant First Class Smith quickly organized a hasty defense. He braved hostile enemy fire to personally engage the enemy with hand grenades and anti-tank weapons, and organized the evacuation of three wounded soldiers. Fearing the enemy would overrun their defenses,

Sergeant First Class Smith moved under withering enemy fire to man a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on a damaged armored personnel carrier. In total disregard for his own life, he maintained his exposed position in order to engage the attacking enemy force. During this action, he was mortally wounded. His courageous actions helped defeat the enemy attack, and resulted in as many as 50 enemy soldiers killed, while allowing the safe withdrawal of numerous wounded soldiers.

On November 10, 2006 President Bush announced that Corporal Jason Dunham would receive the Medal of Honor posthumously for his acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty on April 14, 2004 in Iraq. Corporal Dunham's squad was conducting a reconnaissance mission in the town of Karabilah, Iraq when they heard rocket-propelled grenade and small arms fire erupt two kilometers to the West. Their Battalion Commander's convoy had been ambushed and Corporal Dunham immediately ordered his Team to advance towards the engagement to provide support. As they approached the site they were immediately engaged by enemy fire. Corporal Dunham ordered his Team to dismount their vehicles and led them several blocks south of the ambushed convoy. There they discovered seven Iraqi vehicles attempting to depart. Corporal Dunham ordered his Marines to block their movement. As they approached the vehicles, an Iraqi insurgent leaped out and grabbed Corporal Dunham by the throat. In the ensuing struggle, Corporal Dunham noticed the Iraqi insurgent had a grenade in his hand and he alerted his fellow Marines as he

wrestled the Iraqi to the ground. Aware of the imminent danger to his Marines and without hesitation, Corporal Dunham threw himself on the grenade using his body to bear the brunt of the explosion, shielding his Marines from the blast. In an ultimate and selfless act of bravery, he saved the lives of two fellow Marines.

Additionally, there are other Medal of Honor nominations being considered at this time, which are at various points in the process that I outlined above, however, it is Department policy not to discuss them until they are decided by the President.

While the Medal of Honor is the only valor award processed through the Department of Defense, the other valor awards mentioned earlier are processed by each Military Department.

I think it most noteworthy to mention that the Military Departments have awarded 26 Service Crosses, 382 Silver Stars, 304 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 3,375 Bronze Stars with Valor devices to our Service members for acts of Valor and Heroism in combat in the Global War on Terrorism. Additionally, many Service-specific valor commendations were awarded for bravery.

I believe that our uniformed leadership not only recognizes, but asserts, its duty to preserve a strong military ethos through the disciplined management of the awards process, and the recognition of those whose actions merit such awards. As you know, some have asserted, based simply on comparisons to other conflicts, that the number of awards for valor is not a suitable number. However, such mathematical inferences are without merit. The Department has not changed the

manner or approach used to recognize its Service member's acts of valor, superior performance or campaign participation. The guiding principles mentioned earlier are carefully maintained and applied with due diligence across the force. Those who compare valor awards from conflict to conflict must understand that the changing nature of warfare from large force on force battles to asymmetric warfare against small bands of insurgents, often utilizing stand-off weapons, does not necessarily support a direct comparison. While direct engagements do occur and often are characterized by extraordinary valor on the part of our forces, the events themselves must be reviewed by military leaders, one-by-one. Valor awards are event driven, with a Service member's actions evaluated against award criteria by experienced commanders who are committed to ensuring that our Service member's valorous acts are recognized in the context of the act, the stated criteria for each award, and the commander's judgment of how these factors come together.

I would like to conclude my comments by saying that the Department recognizes its duty to sustain a credible awards program that is consistent with military tradition and is supportive of a strong military ethos. To that end, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness announced on August 25, 2006 that the Department had begun a comprehensive review of all aspects of award policy and criteria. Specific objectives include: identification of inconsistencies of awards policies among the Services; identification of best practices for processing of awards; adequacy of the number and types of awards

available to commanders; and recommendations for change. The study group conducting the review is working under the oversight of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and has representation from the three Military Departments, the five Military Services, the Institute of Heraldry, and the Center for Military History. We anticipate the study to be complete and a report submitted to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness for consideration in May 2007.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department's military decorations and awards program with you.